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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the issues and desirable professional school counselor responses when working with sexual minority youth in the schools, including gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, and questioning youth. The issues that are addressed include: developing a context in which to discuss these issues; "coming out" or the development aspects of sexual identity development; the extent of the problems that sexual minority youth face in the schools and society; the effects of negative attitudes and violence toward these youth; and ethical and legal issues in dealing with sexual minority youth in schools. In addition, school-based interventions are discussed that focus on the role of the parents and schools, separation (e.g. separate schools for sexual minority youth) or culture change, deliberate psycho-affective education, valuing differences, and the power of subtle symbols. (Contains 105 references.) (Author)

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Running head: COUNSELING SEXUAL MINORITY YOUTH

Sexual Minority Youth in the Schools: Issues and Desirable Counselor Responses (An ACA and ERIC/CASS Premier Special Issues Paper).

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Sexual Minority Youth in the Schools: Issues and Desirable Counselor Responses

Abstract

This paper addresses the issues and desirable professional school counselor responses when working with sexual minority youth in the schools, including gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, and questioning youth. The issues that are addressed include developing a context in which to discuss these issues; "coming out" or the developmental aspects of sexual identity development; the extent of the problems that sexual minority youth face in the schools and society; the effects of negative attitudes and violence toward these youth; and ethical and legal issues in dealing with sexual minority youth in the schools. In addition, school-based interventions are discussed that focus on the role of the parents and schools, separation (e.g. separate schools for sexual minority youth) or culture change, deliberate psycho-affective education, valuing differences, and the power of subtle symbols.

Sexual Minority Youth in the Schools: Issues and Desirable Counselor Responses

Sexual minority youth as they progress through elementary, middle, and secondary schools in the United States are confronted every day with taunts, epithets, and a host of other negative, insulting, and derogatory words from their peers designed to bring them into conformity with the dominant majority culture's view of "normal" sexuality, i.e. a heterosexual or opposite-sex sexual orientation (Chung & Katayama, 1998; Nichols, 1999; Pope, 2000; Pope, Bunch, Szymanski, & Rankins, 2003). The television programs and movies that they watch, the advertisements that they see, and their parents, teachers, school administrators, and others give them at best a mixed message, but more usually provide a negative view on who they are and how they will end up (Rotheram-Borus & Fernandez, 1995).

Living in such an environment takes a psychological toll on a young person who is gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, or simply questioning if they are different sexually and affectionally from many of their peers as these statements are occurring at a time when sexual minority youth so desperately want and need to belong. The American Counseling Association and American School Counselor Association have begun to take strong, concerted action to address school violence (Sandhu & Aspy, 2000) and to protect our students in general and especially those categories of students who are most at risk of physical and emotional violence from this bullying behavior; this includes the sexual minority youth in the schools (American Counseling Association, 2000; American School Counselor Association, 2000; Coleman & Remafedi, 1989; Just the Facts Coalition, 2000; Nichols, 1999; Pope, 2000; Pope, et al., 2003)

The problems that sexual minority youth face in our schools are overwhelming. D'Augelli (2002) studied the mental health problems of lesbian, gay, and bisexual youths using a sample of 542 youths from a variety of community settings. Over one-third of the sample reported a past suicide attempt. More symptoms were related to parents not knowing about youths' sexual orientation or with both parents having negative reactions to youths' sexual orientation. More than three-quarters had been verbally abused because of their sexual orientation, and 15% reported physical attacks. More than one-third said they had lost friends because of their sexual orientation. Youths who had experienced more victimization and who had lost friends reported more mental health symptoms.

D'Augelli, Pilkington, and Hershberger (2002) studied 350 lesbian, gay, or bisexual youths who were at least 21 years old. Over half reported verbal abuse in high school as a direct result of their sexual orientation. Eleven percent (11%) had been physically assaulted. Young people who were more open about their sexual orientation in high school and who had a history of more gender atypical behavior were victimized more often. Males reported being targeted more often than females. Their current mental health symptoms, especially traumatic stress reactions, were directly associated with having experienced more verbal abuse in high school.

Finally, there appears to be a direct relationship between being on the receiving end of at-school victimization and high-risk health behaviors. Bontempo and D'Augelli (2002) in a study of 9,188 high school students from the 9th to the 12th grades with a mean age of 16 years, found that, in a sub-sample of 315 lesbian, gay, or bisexual (LGB) students, the combined effect of LGB status and high levels of at-school victimization was associated with the highest levels of

health risk behaviors, even higher than a similar sample of their heterosexual peers.

Sexual minority youth are an at-risk population and deserve the same kinds of support and assistance that other at-risk populations now routinely receive (Pope et al., 2003). Acts of violence, whether directed at people because they look and act different, or it is said about others who look and act different, can no longer be tolerated in our schools. Professional school counselors in particular because of their role in the school are very important in eradicating these incidents.

> This verbal and physical harassment is designed to elicit conformity from those so targeted and security for the deliverer, 'no matter how bad my life is, at least I'm not one of THEM.' To be a boy or girl who is 'different' from your peers' notions of what a male or female is supposed to do or be is to become the object of derisive comments challenging your sexual orientation. In the USA if you are a sensitive boy who cries at movies, or an athletic girl who wears jeans and no makeup, you are subject to whispers or catcalls from your peers. To be different during a time when conformity to your peer group is the norm is to be a target for verbal and physical harassment from that same group, especially about sexuality (Pope, 2000).

It is a well know and accepted fact that professional school counselors are confronted regularly with elementary, middle, and secondary school students who are sexual minorities, including those who are questioning their sexual orientation (Cooley, 1998). Fontaine (1998) surveyed school counselors and found that more than half (51%) of both middle and high school counselors had worked with at least one student who was questioning their sexual orientation and that 42% had worked with at least one self-identified lesbian or gay student. Twenty-one

percent (21%) of elementary school counselors also reported that they were aware of students in their schools who were identifying as gay or lesbian, or were questioning their sexual orientation. Counselors desperately need to know what to do when that young person walks into the school counseling office and says, "I think I might be a lesbian."

There is yet another problem. Professional school counselors overwhelmingly want to provide counseling services to sexual minority students, but are being prevented. Sawyer, et al. (2002) conducted a random survey of 335 counselors who were members of the American Counseling Association or American School Counselor Association. They found that, although 90% of the sample agreed that school counselors should provide counseling to students to help them cope with harassment from their peers, only 75% actually provided such services – a performance gap of 15%. Even larger performance gaps appeared when questions regarding counseling students about sexual behavior (26%) or HIV status (35%) were asked. When these school counselors were then asked if counseling students about their sexual orientation should be their role, only 68% said that it should; however, of that 68%, over 90% actually provided this service. Counselors need information to provide to students as well as guidelines about how to go about providing such critical services. The problem may lie with school boards, administrators, teachers, school nurses, school psychologists, school social

workers, or even the school counselors; one or all of whom may be fearful of repercussions when such services are provided or may have religious values against supporting sexual minority youth. In this paper these issues will be addressed directly.

The following paper provides guidelines to aid the professional school counselor in helping these courageous young people. In this paper the following issues will be addressed: developing a context in which to discuss sexual minority student issues; "coming out" or the developmental aspects of sexual identity development; the extent of the problems that sexual minority youth face in the schools and society; the effects of negative attitudes and violence toward these youth; and ethical and legal issues in dealing with sexual minority youth in the schools. In addition, school-based interventions are discussed that focus on the role of the parents and schools, separation (e.g. separate schools for sexual minority youth) or culture change, deliberate psycho-affective education, valuing differences, and the power of subtle symbols.

Developing a context in which to discuss these issues

In this paper sex will be discussed -- sexuality, sexual orientation, and other related issues. Sex and sexuality in American society are taboo subjects. We know that we are supposed to know about it, we are excited about it, we talk about it in indirect ways, we sometimes even talk about it in direct ways but that is generally considered unseemly. Perhaps our parents talked to us (rarely with us)

about it. Our schools have had to fight hard to get an opportunity to teach about it. Socially, we are just not very comfortable with sex (LeVay & Valente, 2002).

In this paper, the general term "sexual minority" will be used to include a variety of young people who are in various stages of their psychosocial, gender, sexual, and cultural identity development processes. The term "sexual minority" includes gays (males who identify with a same-sex sexual or affectional orientation), lesbians (females who identify with a same-sex sexual or affectional orientation), bisexuals (males or females who identify with both a same-sex and opposite sex sexual or affectional orientation), transgender (individuals who are physiologically one gender but who are psychologically the opposite gender), intersex (individuals who have biological characteristics of both males and females). queer (individuals who identify as "different" sexually than the majority culture), and questioning (individuals who are unsure of their sexual or affectional orientation or gender identity). This sometimes will be abbreviated as GLBTIQQ in this paper.

Further, there are a number of well written articles and books on the etiology of sexual orientation (LeVay, 1991, 1999; LeVay & Valente, 2002). The topic of sexual orientation can be expected to be complex, evocative, and confusing. To date, it remains unclear exactly how sexual orientation is determined. Moreover, because conservative religious and political groups tend to view homosexuality as a moral issue, while others see it as a civil rights issue, it cannot be separated easily from either context: a person's sexual orientation has both political and religious implications. Finally, given the lack of definitive answers from scientific research, confusion and uncertainty tend to underlie the often-intense discussions about the sexual behavior and mental health needs of sexual minorities in our society (Barret & Logan, 2001; Barret & Robinson, 2000; Pope & Barret, 2002b). Rarely does anyone agree on anything, yet it appears that there is a growing

research consensus about the roots of sexual orientation, i.e., there is a strong biological component (genetic and/or hormonal) for many who have a sexual minority identity. It is imperative that this type of information be readily available to both parents and students. This paper makes the assumption that the causes of sexual orientation are not known definitively, but that sexual orientation is not mutable.

Social attitudes toward homosexuality have also undergone many changes. From the acceptance and integration of same-sex persons into the native American tribes of North America (Roscoe, 1989), to the acceptance of same-sex unions by the Christian church in the middle ages (Boswell, 1980, 1995), to the persecution of homosexually-oriented persons under the Victorians (Rowse, 1977), to the enlightened approaches of pre-Nazi Germany (Hirschfeld, 1935), pre-Stalinist Russia (Thorstad, 1974), and imperial China (Ruan, 1991), and finally to the removal of homosexuality from the psychiatric manual of mental disorders (Bayer, 1981), history has seen an ebb and flow in the social acceptance of same-sex orientations (Pope & Barret, 2002b)

In the past, sexual minority adults had to cope with active anger, religious hatred, psychiatric labels, and occupational discrimination. Pope and Barrett (2002a) described how aspects of this discrimination were reflected in the workplace.

> If they did not live in large cities such as New York, San Francisco, and Boston where vital lesbian and gay culture thrives, gay men and lesbians generally kept their sexual orientation a closely guarded secret .... Many of them fabricated social lives that included dates with persons of the opposite sex and rarely would share their vacation photographs with their co-workers. If there were a social event with co-workers, many would bring opposite sex "dates" that had been secured to help "cover" their secret. Some even chose

> careers on the basis of its "safety" in the event they did decide to come out. For example, it was not unusual to hear young gay men or lesbians speak of avoiding careers that involved working with children or commenting on "conservative" corporations that would not deal with their sexual orientation easily. Others carefully guarded their sexual orientation for fear that the promotions would be denied them if they were more "out." Fortunately today, for many lesbian and gay clients, much of this is changing, as it is not unusual to hear casual conversations about the social and relationship aspects of gay and lesbian co-workers in the workplace (p. 215).

For today's sexual minority youth, there are many positive sexual minority role models available. Today, GLBTIQQ individuals appear in virtually every aspect of daily life. They are more "out" to their families and co-workers, visible in their neighborhoods, assertive in demanding equal rights, and have moved beyond the fear and shame that used to keep most of them invisible. This change can be seen in all aspects of the media, gay-positive-statements from national and local political candidates and in the debates within virtually all Christian denominations about the role of gay men and lesbians within the church (Barret & Logan, 2001).

"Coming out" or the developmental aspects of sexual identity development

"Coming out to self," or accepting one's own same-sex feelings, attraction, and orientation, is an important and necessary developmental task for anyone who is a gay male or lesbian woman, but is especially important for the gay or lesbian adolescent (Pope, 1995). Males tend to define themselves as gay in the context of same-sex erotic contact, but females experience lesbian feelings in situations of romantic love and emotional attachment (Troiden, 1979). Coleman, Butcher, and Carson (1984) provided a good explanation of general developmental stages and the tasks associated with each stage.

> If developmental tasks are not mastered at the appropriate stage, the individual suffers from immaturities and incompetencies and is placed at a serious disadvantage in adjusting at later developmental levels -- that is, the individual becomes increasingly vulnerable through accumulated failures to master psychosocial requirements. . . . Some developmental tasks are set by the individual's own needs, some by the physical and social environment. Members of different socioeconomic and sociocultural groups face somewhat different developmental tasks (p. 111).

Pope (1995) stated that this developmental task of discovery and acceptance of who we are and how we function sexually plays an important role, especially in adolescence. This is, however, also the time for many gay males and lesbians when there exists the greatest denial of differences from their peer group. Unfortunately, if the developmental tasks of sexual orientation identification are not accomplished during this critical time and are denied and delayed, then other tasks are also delayed causing a developmental "chain reaction" and thereby delaying other tasks such as relationship formation. It is very common to hear that gay men who came out when they were substantially past adolescence have all the problems associated with those of teenagers who have just begun dating. It is important to note that, once the critical period has passed in the developmental task, it may be very difficult or impossible to correct the psychological difficulties that have occurred as a result of this.

Adolescence is not an easy time in anyone's life because of the required psychosexual identity development. This tumultuous time is only made more difficult, however, when homophobic slurs and insults are hurled at young persons who may have already begun to realize that their sexual orientation may be different from their heterosexual peers. Both verbal and physical harassment are

designed to elicit conformity from those so targeted along with security for the deliverer, "no matter how bad my life is, at least I'm not one of THEM." A large study of Minnesota junior and senior high school students found that about 11% were still unsure about their sexual orientation (Remafedi, Resnick, Blum, & Harris, 1992). Twenty percent of self-identified gay and bisexual men surveyed on college campuses knew about their sexual orientation in high school and another 17% knew as far back as grade school they were gay. The figures are 6% and 11% respectively for lesbians (Elliott & Brantley, 1997).

Coming to terms with one's sexual differences during the teen years make forming a sexual identity a greater challenge (D'Augelli, 1992). This is because youth are socialized in the home and school, in the media, and throughout most of life to appreciate falling in love with members of the other gender (Rotheram-Borus & Fernandez, 1995). Though there is wide variation in sexual identity formation in adolescence, some common themes emerge for many gay teens: feeling different, experiencing confusion, and finally expressing acceptance (Mannino, 1999). Chung and Katayama (1998) reported that the formation of sexual identity is a developmental process with these stages: awareness of same-sex feelings, feeling confused because one's assumed sexual orientation differs from one's perceived orientation, tolerance and acceptance of a lesbian or gay identity, and integration of a sexual identity with other aspects of one's life.

Gay men and lesbian women often reported feeling different from others during childhood. Many of these differences are in gender nonconformity, that is, play and sport interests are more congruent with the other gender (Mondimore, 1996). Boys may find they are quieter, less active, and more sensitive than other boys, while girls may find that they are more physically active, assertive, and more "tom-boyish" than their peers. Marinoble (1998) described the difficulties experienced by many such sexual minority youth: including identity conflict,

feelings of isolation and stigmatization, peer relationship problems, and family disruptions. Omizo, Omizo, and Okamoto (1998) found that common sentiments among young sexual minority persons included confusion, fear of not being understood, fear of negative or violent reactions from others, concerns about what kind of a future they might have, poor self-esteem, and internalized feelings of self-hatred. Within especially conservative cultures or families, such as those of some Asian American youth, there are few if any positive role models with whom sexual minority youth may identify (Chung & Katayama, 1998). For such youth, it is likely that feelings of isolation and confusion are magnified.

Some gay youth cope with their confusion by concretizing their gay identity very quickly. This is sometimes initiated by puberty, where feeling different now takes on a clearer, more precise feeling of sexual attraction. Herdt and Boxer (1996), in a study of 200 ethnically diverse lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth, found that awareness of same-sex attraction occurred between ages 11 and 12 on average. Other gay teens try to deny their same-sex feelings and become super-heterosexual in an effort to retrain themselves, and still others become bewildered, guilt ridden, and lonely, escaping into substance abuse, depression, and suicidal ideation.

Not all gay and lesbian teenagers accept themselves and this is understandable given the constant battering they receive from some cultures and religions, as well as from their peers, family, and society (Mannino, 1999). Eventually, however, the majority of gay youth who do accept their sexuality begin to feel a need to disclose their sexual orientation to others. There are many strategies to such disclosure, but close friends are usually told first, with parents being told later.

The fear of rejection and isolation, along with parental sanctions tend to be ever present; therefore, some sexual minority youth decide to not disclose at all, especially if they are still in high school or living with their parents or other family members (Newman & Muzzonigro, 1993). When young people do decide to reveal their sexual orientation to their parents, having some idea of a "format" for such a coming out process is often helpful. Guidelines for someone who is coming out to parents include (http://www.umsl.edu/~pope):

1. Be clear yourself first. Tell them when you have already accepted your own sexual orientation and are comfortable and happy with this. Then it is important to express this to your parents. If you are not comfortable or happy, they will perceive this incongruity between your words and feelings and they will want to try to change you.

2. Tell them about your sexual orientation when things are going well for both you and them, or during a period when there is relative tranquility in your lives.

3. Do not come out during an argument because this knowledge may then become a weapon to be used to cause pain to everyone.

4. It is okay to tell only one parent initially if that is easier or more comfortable for you. It is important that both parents know eventually.

5. Begin by telling your parents that you love them. If you do not usually say these things, then find other positive thoughts to share.

6. Be prepared for your parents to be upset and hurt by this news. Your parents may respond with anger, but try not to be defensive and angry also. Be prepared also for your parents to say "I've known this for many years" or to say nothing. Different parents react differently.

7. Give them the time and distance they need to assimilate this information.

8. Tell them that you are still the same person and you hope they will continue to love you.

9. Try to maintain open lines of communication. Your parents are going to go through a period of adjustment as well -- feelings of guilt, lost dreams, and greater uncertainty of the future. Sometimes they just need time so they can grieve the loss of their expectations for you.

10. Get reading materials and share them with your parents (e.g. Don Clark's *Loving Someone Gay*). Get the address and phone number of the local Parents, Family, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) and give it to your parents.

11. It is probably more important for you to come out to your parents than it is for them. Do not force the discussion further if your parents are not ready to continue the dialogue at this time. Sometimes they just need some time and space to process this information and gain some perspective.

Savin-Williams (1990) reported in a study of gay and lesbian youth that most of those who had successfully come out to self could be described as: 1) being politically and socially involved with other gays and lesbians, having numerous same-sex sexual encounters, regularly frequenting bars, and describing an early onset of same-sex sexual feelings that were beyond their control; 2) feeling accepted by family members and friends and feeling that they had more friends; 3) feeling they were accomplished and self-sufficient, but not feeling competitive and forceful or affectionate and compassionate; 4) being generally older and well-educated, coming from wealthy urban families; 5) measuring their self-esteem and sense of well being by their relationships with friends and by their career and academic achievements rather than by their possessions and good looks; and 6) being politically liberal and supportive of the feminist movement.

Extent of the problems that sexual minority youth face in the schools and society

Although a number of social and environmental difficulties that sexual minority youth may encounter have previously been discussed, a more intensive focus on education and socialization issues is warranted because the schools are the workplace for young people. Owens (1998) captured the experience of sexual minority students in the schools.

> Schools are social molds where rigid expectations of conduct and behavior are reinforced. Conformity is tyrannical. The wrong clothes or the wrong comment can result in ostracism. Sexual conformity is enforced most rigidly. Those that do not conform are open to the physical, verbal, and mental bullying of the majority. Reports from lesbian and gay teens range from put-

> downs and "rude comments and jokes" through "profanities written on my locker" and threats to actual violence and physical abuse. The overall result is loneliness, fear, and self-loathing (pp. 95-96).

Sexual minority youth face stigmatization and a significant number of stressors in the school environment, including ostracism, physical violence, and verbal harassment (Allport, 1958; Gustavsson & MacEachron, 1998; Jordan, Vaughan, & Woodworth, 1997; Pope, 2000). The search for one's sexual identity (male or female) is an important part of adolescence (SIECUS, 1995), but when that search is intertwined with minority status, that is, either race or sexual orientation, it is even more complex (Chung & Katayama, 1998; Dube & Savin-Williams, 1999; Herring, 1998; Sanchez, 1995).

There is great fear and loathing of gay and lesbian people in general in the USA. Ilnytzky (1999) reported that anti-gay attacks in the entire United States dropped 4% in 1998, but the assaults that did occur were more violent and led to more hospitalizations. The number of attacks dropped from 2,665 in 1997 to 2,552 in 1998; however, the number of victims requiring inpatient hospitalization more than doubled, from 53 in 1997 to 110 in 1998. There also was a 71% rise in assaults and attempted assaults with guns. Incidents in which bats, clubs and other blunt objects were used increased by 47%.

There is great fear and loathing of gay and lesbian adolescents in particular. In fact gay and lesbian high school students face greater prejudice in school than African American teen students do according to a CBS News poll that surveyed the attitudes of the high school senior class of the year 2000. The findings included the following: 1) one-third of students know that gay or lesbian students were made fun of, verbally or physically abused, and threatened; 2) 28% of students polled have made anti-gay remarks themselves; 3) nearly a third of those polled have a family member or close friend who is gay or lesbian; 4) among those

making anti-gay remarks, boys are more than twice as likely than girls to have done so; and 5) those who report their parents make anti-gay remarks are more than twice as likely to do so themselves (CBS News Poll, 1999). A survey conducted in 14 American cities found over 46% of gay youth who disclosed their same-sex sexual orientation ("came out") to friends lost at least one of them as a friend (Ryan & Futterman, 1997). Marsiglio (1993) in a national survey of young people who were 15 to 19 years of age found only 12% would feel "comfortable" having a lesbian or gay male friend. Male youth in particular were more likely to hold negative stereotypes regarding lesbian and gay youth as 89% of the male adolescents in this study reported that they felt sex between two men was "disgusting." Malinsky (1997) in a study of 27 self-identified lesbians and bisexual girls between the ages of 15-21 found that 25 (93%) of the study participants reported direct, first hand knowledge of harassment based on actual or perceived sexual orientation. It is important to note that such harassment reported here was sometimes directed at those who simply associated with these young lesbian or bisexual women.

GLSEN rated 42 of the nation's largest public school districts on their policies and programs designed to serve sexual minority students and school workers. Only four districts got an "A" -- Los Angeles, San Diego, Philadelphia, and Dade County, Florida. Twenty major school districts received a grade of "D." According to spokesperson Kate Frankfurt, "that means nearly 2 million students go to school in districts that fail" in basic gay human rights (Herscher, 1998, p. A20).

These negative feelings toward sexual minority youth are being reinforced by the indifference of school workers to these issues. Derogatory remarks by fellow students directed to sexual minority students often go unchallenged by teachers, administrators, or school counselors, whereas a similar racist statement would

more likely prompt a reprimand (Krivascka, Savin-Williams, & Slater, 1992; O'Conor, 1994; Pope, 2000). The dynamics, when such comments are made in full view of sexual minority school staff, are complicated when sexual minority school employees are trying to hide their sexual orientation and to distance themselves from sexual minority youth (Jordan, Vaughan, & Woodworth, 1997). Reluctant or unable to support sexual minority youth, these sexual minority teachers, counselors, administrators, or other school staff fail to provide the role modeling or safety that other cultural minority school workers (e.g. African American, Asian American, Native American, or Hispanic American) provide for students from their own specific culture.

Fontaine (1998) found that those who were the perpetrators of harassment and intimidation of sexual minority students were aided by the indifference of school workers.

> Homophobic and intolerant educational environments can only exist with the implicit and/or explicit cooperation of schools officials and personnel. Evidence suggests that teachers, counselors, and administrators exhibit distressingly high levels of homophobic attitudes and feelings (p. 8).

Eric Rofes (1989) wrote eloquently about the violence against sexual minority youth and pointed out its effects.

> Many young people--especially those who were cross-dressers, or young men who were effeminate, or young women who were "too butch" (touch, independent, and "masculine")--found their peers hostile, often to the point of violence. For gay youth who could "pass" and remain undetected in the school system, advocates found the hiding process robbed students of much of their energy and vitality. Whether lesbian and gay youth were open about their identities or were closeted, societal prejudice took its toll; young gay people

were often anti-social, alcohol- and drug-abusing, and/or depressed to the point of suicide (p. 449).

Anthony Gomez, a 14 year old student at Hayward, California, describes his own experience in the following manner:

> A lot of people pick on me at school and pick fights with me. At school, I've had fag spray-painted on my locker, gay porn pinned to my locker, and death threats on my locker too. I had three boys suspended the other day for harassing me, saying they're trying to pick fights with me, calling me a faggot, a queer, and all that stuff (Gray, 1999, p. 81).

Finally, The Associated Press (1999) reported that two college preparatory school students in Greenwood, Massachusetts at the Northfield Mount Hermon School -- one with an appointment to the Naval Academy -- were convicted of assault and battery for carving an anti-gay slur into another student's back because he liked to listen to the British rock band Queen. Jonathan Shapiro, 18, and Matthew Rogers, 20, used a pocket knife to cut "HOMO" into the back of a 17-year-old student at the school. "There was apparently a disagreement over the style of music he liked," said Police Chief David Hastings. "Rogers called it a gay band." Hastings described the wounds as "deep enough to draw blood. When I saw them, they were three days old and they were still very visible. The letters were 4- to 5-inches high and ran all the way across his back." The victim, a junior, did not require hospitalization, and initially kept quiet about the incident. He left school and returned to his family. Shapiro, of Keene, New Hampshire, and

Rogers, of Franklin, Tennessee, were placed on probation for three years for this crime. Rogers had accepted an appointment to the U.S. Naval Academy, but Rogers' appointment to the U.S. Naval Academy was withdrawn, because of the incident. Concerned Students of Des Moines reported that the average high school student hears approximately 25 anti-gay remarks in a typical school day (The Advocate, 1997).

Effects of negative attitudes and violence toward these youth

Adolescents who are different face a variety of barriers to healthy psychological development, most created and delivered by their peers, family, culture, and society (Pope, 2000). Besner and Spungin (1995) reported a variety of consequences for the lesbian and gay adolescent such as a high incidence of acting out in school; rebelling against authority; abusing alcohol and other substances; feeling depressed, isolated, and confused; engaging in prostitution; and attempting suicide, many times succeeding. Jordan, Vaughan, and Woodworth (1997) in a study of 34 lesbian and gay high school students reported a clear relationship between derogatory language directed against sexual minority students by their peers and adults in the school setting and self-harmful behavior, such as suicidal ideation, attempted suicide, running away, poor academic performance, and truancy. Considering the stress of adolescence and the additional "cultural minority stress" of being a sexual minority youth, it is particularly disheartening to discover that a survey found that less than one in five

lesbian and gay adolescent students could identify someone who was very supportive of them (Telljohann & Price, 1993).

Remafedi (1987) found, through a series of studies of self-identified gay male adolescents, that they were at high risk for physical and psychosocial dysfunction as a result of experiencing strong negative attitudes from parents and peers. In a followup to those studies, Remafedi, Farrow, and Deisher (1991) in a study of 137 gay and bisexual male youths found that 30% had attempted suicide once and 13% had made multiple attempts. The mean age of those attempting suicide was 15.5 years. Three quarters (75%) of first attempts came after the teenagers had labeled themselves as bisexual or gay. Risk factors which increase the potential for suicide in sexual minority youth are posted at www.umsl.edu/~pope and include:

1. General risk factors

    a. Awareness/identification of same-sex sexual orientation at an early age.

    b. Self-acceptance of same-sex sexual orientation.

    c. Conflicts with others related to same-sex sexual orienation.

    d. Problems in same-sex sexual relationships.

2. Society

    a. Discrimination/oppression of sexual minorities by society.

    b. Portrayal of sexual minorities as self-destructive by society.

3. Poor Self-esteem

a. Internalization of image of sexual minorities as sick and bad.

b. Internalization of image of sexual minorities as helpless and self destructive.

4. Identity conflicts

a. Denial of same-sex sexual orientation.

b. Despair in a recognition of a same-sex sexual orientation.

5. Family

a. Rejection of child due to same-sex sexual orientation.

b. Abuse/harassment of child due to same-sex sexual orientation.

c. Failure of child to meet parental/societal expectation.

d. Perceived rejection of child due to same-sex sexual orientation.

6. Religion

a. Child's same-sex sexual orientation seen as incompatible with family religious beliefs.

b. Youth feels sinful, condemned to hell due to same-sex sexual orientation.

c. Abuse/harassment of sexual minority youth by peers.

d. Lack of accurate information about homosexuality.

7. Social Isolation

a. Rejection of sexual minority youth by friends and peers.

b. Social withdrawal of sexual minority youth.

c. Loneliness and inability to meet others like themselves.

8. Substance Abuse

a. Substance use to relieve pain of oppression.

b. Substance use to reduce inhibitions on homosexual feelings.

9. Professional Help

a. Refusal to accept same-sex sexual orientation of youth.

b. Refusal to support same-sex sexual orientation of youth.

c. Involuntary treatment to change same-sex sexual orientation of youth.

d. Inability to discuss issues related to homosexuality.

10. Residential Programs

a. Refusal to accept/support same-sex sexual orientation of youth.

b. Isolation of sexual minority youth by staff and residents.

c. Inability to support sexual minority youth in conflicts with residents.

11. Relationship Problems

a. Inability to develop relationship skills like heterosexually-oriented youth.

b. Extreme dependency needs due to prior emotional deprivation.

c. Absence of social supports in resolving relationship conflicts.

12. Independent Living

a. Lack of support from family.

b. Lack of support from adult sexual minority community.

c. Involvement with street life.

13. AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome)

a. Unsafe sexual practices.

b. Secrecy/unplanned nature of early sexual experiences.

14. Future Outlook

a. Despair of life as hard as the present.

b. Absence of positive adult gay/lesbian role models

According to Gibson (1989), suicide is the leading cause of death among gay youth. They are from three to five times more likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual peers (Bailey & Phariss, 1996; Brown, 1991; Gibson, 1989; Hafen & Frandsen, 1986; Mondimore, 1996). Gibson (1989) also found that gay male adolescents are six times more likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual counterparts.

Currently, there is much discussion among researchers about these statistics based on the skewed demographics of the populations sampled (Muerher, 1995; Saulnier, 1998). The results of many of these studies have been criticized for the

retrospective nature of the reports, the involvement of many of the youths in social service systems, and the recruitment of study participants from bars, which might inflate the actual numbers. It is quite difficult to gather generalizable data on this population because of the difficulty of operationalizing sexual orientation and the previsouly cited issues.

Savin-Williams (2001) questioned the findings and interpretation regarding the suicide data collected by Remafedi and similar researchers for two distinct reasons: the methods used to classify a subject as "sexual minority" and the operational definition of suicide "attempt" were both flawed. He reported data from two studies that indicated that sexual-minority youths, more broadly defined in terms of sexual behavior, were only slightly more likely than heterosexual youths to report a suicide attempt. Then, using a more sophisticated method of assessment of suicide attempts, Savin-Williams was able to distinguish true from false attempts. This method eliminated over half of the suicide attempt reports among sexual minorities because these attempts were re-classified as false attempts, i.e., as ideation rather than a concrete act to end life. Furthermore, many of the true attempts were also not life threatening, suggesting that these suicide reports were attempts to communicate the hardships of their lives, a proverbial "cry for help." Savin-Williams and the more current writings (McDaniel, Purcell, & D'Augelli, 2001) are now beginning to discuss issues of psychological resilience in sexual minority youth.

Ethical and legal issues in dealing with sexual minority youth in the schools

The question of what is the ethical and legal role of the professional school counselor when counseling sexual minority students is an important practical one for school counselors (McFarland & Dupuis, 2001; Strong & Callahan, 2001). Ethically, the role is clear. School counselors are there to assist students in discovering who they truly and honestly are and to help them develop a strong and

positive personal and cultural identity (American Counseling Association, 2000; American School Counselor Association, 2000).

Research conducted by Nicolosi (1991) described an approach called "reparative therapy" (RT) that claims to change sexual orientation (always from gay to straight, rather than the opposite). RT parallels another "treatment", "conversion therapy" (CT), hailed by conservative Christian groups as proof that prayer and meditation can "drive the sin out" and bring the "sick homosexual" back to health. Both RT and CT have received abundant attention and both have been soundly condemned by the American Counseling Association, the American Psychiatric Association, the American Psychological Association, the National Association of Social Workers, the National Association of School Psychologists, the American School Health Association, the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association, and the American Academy of Pediatrics. Mental health workers are warned that research indicates both of these "treatments" are more likely to be harmful than helpful. Many believe it is unethical for mental health professionals to practice CT or RT (Barret,1999; Just the Facts Coalition, 2000).

As to queries regarding whether sexual orientation is open to change, Money (1990) stated:

> The concept of voluntary choice is as much in error (as applied to sexual orientation) as in its application to handedness or to native language. You do not choose your native language as a preference, even though you are born without it. You assimilate it into a brain pre-natally made ready to receive a native language from those who constitute your primate troop and who speak that language to you and listen to you when you speak it. Once assimilated through the ears into the brain, a native language becomes securely locked in -- as securely as if it has been phylogenetically

> preordained to be locked in pre-natally by a process of genetic pre-determinism or by the determinism of fetal hormonal or other brain chemistries. So also with sexual status or orientation, which, whatever its genesis, also may become assimilated and locked into the brain as mono sexually homosexual or heterosexual or as bisexually a mixture of both (pp. 43-44).

Further, according to Coleman (1982),

> It is unethical and morally questionable to offer a 'cure' to homosexuals who request a change in their sexual orientation. While there have been reports that changes in behavior have occurred for individuals seeking treatment, it is questionable whether it is beneficial to change their behavior to something that is incongruent with their sexual orientation (p.87).

Legally, the role of the professional school counselor is limited by school district policies as well as by state laws and regulations that govern the credentialing of school counselors in their state (McFarland & Dupuis, 2001). Also, if the school counselor is licensed as a professional counselor or other mental health professional, the person must operate within the bounds of confidentiality as outlined in the state laws and judicial cases that govern the specialty. Some school districts may require parental disclosure and consent; others may not. School counselors, therefore, must be knowledgeable of the specific policies, laws, and regulations that govern their conduct. It is, however, of the utmost importance to sexual minority students that counselors be seen as their ally and their protector in the school.

Clearly, the shift toward the protection of sexual minority students in the schools is gaining momentum. In 1993, Massachusetts became the first state to ban anti-gay discrimination in its schools and create a statewide "safe schools" program. The U. S. Department of Education issued guidelines in March of 1997

stating that gay and lesbian students are covered by federal prohibitions against sexual harassment.

In 1996, a jury in a federal appellate court in Nabozny v. Podlensy, 92 F.3d 446 (7th US Circuit Court, 1996) deliberated for only two days and found Ashland, Wisconsin public school officials liable for not protecting Jamie Nabozny, a student who had suffered years of relentless physical, sexual, and verbal harassment for being gay. He had been beaten to the point of requiring surgery, urinated on, called anti-gay epithets, and made to suffer repeated assaults and indignities. In a landmark settlement reached after that verdict, he was awarded over $900,000 in damages. In its decision the federal appellate court decision spelled out the constitutional obligation of public schools everywhere to treat abuse of lesbian and gay students and of boys as seriously as any other abuse.

In 1998 a jury in Louisville, Kentucky awarded $220,000 to a 17-year-old girl because the school she attended acted with "deliberate indifference" by permitting other students to call her "lezzie," assault her, and attempt to rape her. Other lawsuits are working their ways through the courts including the 12 year old boy who is suing his Pacifica, California school district for refusing to intervene in his years of harassment and the gay teen who was brutally attacked by eight other students who secured the American Civil Liberties Union to aid his lawsuit against the Kent, Washington school district, as well as lawsuits filed by the American Civil Liberties Union in Kentucky and Texas on school board's prohibiting the gay and lesbian school clubs from meeting.

School-based interventions

In order to protect sexual minority students, schools must take an active role in eliminating anti-gay harassment and creating a positive environment for these students. In this section, the role of parents and school workers will be explored along with specific issues dealing with separation (e.g. separate schools for sexual

minority youth) or culture change, deliberate psycho-affective education, valuing differences, and the power of subtle signs.

Role of parents and school workers.

Both parents and school workers often teach homophobic attitudes in quite subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, ways (Besner & Spungin, 1995; Fontaine, 1997). Some adults do this very consciously because they believe that this is the best way to eliminate such behavior in young people, that it will somehow persuade the child -- through their disapproval -- to not be gay or lesbian. For other adults it is not a conscious process, only one that is ingrained and reinforced through others in their environment. Many never contemplate that they are, in fact, emotionally victimizing the sexual minority student.

Through persistent derogatory jokes, behavioral admonitions ("don't be a sissy" or "don't hold your hand that way, that's too gay" or "girls don't sit like that"), and overheard homophobic conversations, gay and lesbian children absorb these negative attitudes regarding sexual minorities becoming victims of the adults they trust and who profess love for them. How do these gay and lesbian children deal with this incongruity?

Some respond by denying their sexual orientation and dating and engaging in sexual activities with members of the opposite sex, trying to pass as heterosexual. Others respond by developing a strong contempt for those gays and lesbians who are more open and obvious. They may take out their own sexual frustrations through varying degrees of aggression toward gay and lesbian members of the community. Other gay and lesbian teenagers respond by withdrawing from society and becoming shy and isolated. They are reluctant to join in social activities with friends and family and live in a world all their own. Some of these teenagers are so filled with self-hatred they cannot find anything acceptable or positive to say about themselves. Some

> seek out groups that believe their homosexual orientation can be changed. These individuals will go to great extremes and will be highly motivated to do whatever it takes to be straight (Besner & Spungin, 1995, p. 47)

In Savin-Williams' (1990) study predicting self-esteem among lesbian and gay youth, the teenagers with the highest levels of self-esteem felt accepted by their mothers, male and female friends, and their academic advisors. Lesbian youth who had positive parental relationships felt comfortable with their sexual orientation. Satisfying parental relationships, maternal knowledge of their homosexuality, and having relatively little contact with fathers predicted positive self-esteem for gay men. Mothers are important for self-esteem for both gays and lesbians and are viewed as considerably more supportive, warm, and compassionate than fathers. Early parent-child interactions, physical affection, childhood rearing practices, and family religious teachings are considered good predictors of the state of comfort children have with their sexual orientation.

Pope (2000) and Pope and Englar-Carlson (2001) reported that messages that parents give to their children are important in the child's developing self-esteem. Phrases such as "be who you are and never be afraid to express your feelings" or "I love you for you" or "it's okay to talk about anything with me, even if I do not like what you have to say, I will always love you" convey a message of unconditional positive acceptance no matter what the situation is. Unfortunately, parental words spoken in haste and anger can destroy years of positive communication. The best parents weigh the impact of their words before speaking them to children, never saying to children "you are so stupid" or similar phrases, even in jest, as these negative phrases are powerful, rarely being forgotten.

When a student discloses their sexual minority status ("comes out") to school personnel, this is a major event in their life and deserves to be treated in a sensitive and caring way by the school worker. Some guidelines to help school personnel

respond to students when they disclose their sexual minority status are posted at www.umsl.edu/~pope and include:

1. Do not act surprised when someone "comes out" to you, i.e. telling you that they think they ARE homosexually-oriented or bisexually-oriented. They have tested you with a series of "trial balloons" over a period of time and have decided that you can be trusted and helpful. Don't let them down now.

2. Deal with feelings first. Most gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, or questioning (GLBTIQQ) teenagers feel alone, afraid, and guilty. You can help by listening, allowing them to unburden uncomfortable feelings and thoughts.

3. Be supportive. Let GLBTIQQ youth know that they are okay. Explain that many people have struggled with the issue of homosexuality. Acknowledge that dealing with one's sexuality is difficulty. Keep the door open for further conversations and assistance.

4. Assess the student's understanding of homosexuality or gender identity (for transgender students) issues. Replace misinformation with accurate knowledge. Do not assume that GLBTIQQ teens know a lot about human sexuality. We have all been exposed to the same myths and stereotypes, so it is helpful to provide

5. Use nonjudgmental, all-inclusive language in your discussion. Pay attention to verbal and nonverbal cues from students. Do not label or categorize.

6. Respect confidentiality. GLBTIQQ teenagers who share their identity with you have established a sacred trust that must be respected.

7. Anticipate some confusion. Many GLBTIQQ teenagers are sure of their sexual orientation by thei time they enter high school. Others will be confused and unsure.

8. Examine your own biases. You need to remain a neutral source of information and support.

9. Be informed. Most of us are products of a heterosexist/homophobic society that has been paralyzed by misinformation and fear. You cannot be free of it by just deciding to be free; read reliable resources and talk to qualified persons.

10. Know when and where to seek help. Know the referral agencies and counselors in your area. Gay and lesbian hotlines can provide access to professional persons and agencies that are qualified to help. (Besner & Spungin, 1995)

Separation or culture change.

During the 1980s and 1990s between the political far-right's attempts to take control of school boards and the unionization of school workers, the schools became the battleground on which was played many of the tough political

questions of the day. During this time, the issue of what to do with sexual minority students also came to the top of the school agenda.

Responses to these issues varied considerably among schools. In the New York City schools, the Harvey Milk School was established in 1985 for gay and lesbian students who were not succeeding. In Dallas, Texas, a private school for lesbian and gay youth opened in 1997 (Williams, 1997). In the Los Angeles Unified School District, Dr. Virginia Uribe established "Project 10", a dropout prevention program offering emotional support, information, and resources to young people who identify themselves as lesbian, gay, or bisexual or who wish to obtain information about sexual orientation (Uribe & Harbeck, 1992). The San Francisco Unified School District, under the leadership of Kevin Gogin, began a similar program called Project 21 shortly thereafter (Gustavsson & MacEachron, 1998). Most other school districts have established programs like Project 10 and have not chosen to go with the separate school that isolates sexual minority students from the mainstream.

Still another approach has been recommended by Nichols (1999). That author proposed that schools develop a diversity room and staff it with a diversity room specialist not only to meet the unique needs of sexual minority adolescents but also to encourage a safe, accepting climate for all students.

Changing the school culture is imperative in this process of stopping school violence against sexual minority youth (Pope, 2000). Each stakeholder in the school system has a vital role in solving this problem including school board members, administrators, teachers, professional school counselors, school nurses, school social workers, school psychologists, and cafeteria, maintenance, and transportation workers. School stakeholders need tools to combat this violence which will enable them to at least promote an environment of tolerance, and ideally to foster the creation of an environment in which sexual minority youth,

like all other youth, are appreciated and valued. Merely being a sympathetic teacher is insufficient; teachers need more training themselves. Sears (1992) in a study of 258 teachers in training found that fully 75% of the sample of teachers expressed interest in attending a school sponsored workshop on strategies in working with sexual minority students. Such a workshop would be expected to provide up-to-date information along with more knowledge and skills regarding sexual orientation, sexual identity, and gender identity. Kerr et al. (1989) found that over 62% of health and education professionals said they desperately needed up-to-date information along with more knowledge and skills to discuss and teach about the full range of sexual issues, including sexual orientation, sexual identity, and gender identity.

Schremp (1999) reported in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*:

> A school newspaper survey in the Kirkwood Call last year showed 61% of the students who had answered said they insult people every day using such words as "gay." (Kirkwood, Missouri High School Principal Franklin) McCallie equated his student's use of "gay" or "fag" as a putdown to a racial or ethnic slur. ... In November, his teachers took a "Teaching Respect for All" workshop (created by the Gay, Lesbian, Straight Educators Network and Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays). ... 'I just felt that it is so obvious that a principal and a staff of a high school ought to be on the side of safety for all students, that it really shouldn't be a monumental step whatsoever,' he said. 'I'm not telling you that everyone agrees on the subject of homosexuality. I think that we are in agreement that everyone be safe in the schools' (p. B4).

The "Teaching Respect for All" workshop was created by the Gay, Lesbian, Straight Educators Network (GLSEN) and Parents, Family, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFFLAG) and is an important resource in combating violence against sexual minority students and transforming the school culture that tolerates

such violence. Bauman and Sachs-Kapp (1998) outlined another approach -- a "Hate Hurts" campaign -- to raise awareness of sexual minority youth issues among school stakeholders. As Principal McCallie said in the newspaper article, "you do not have to accept homosexuality as equal to heterosexuality, but you do have to accept that everyone should be safe in the schools" (p. B4). Professional school counselors must be in the forefront of such programs.

Finally, professional school counselors can participate in specialized training on developing and providing counseling services for sexual minority students offered by the Healthy Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Students Project (Anderson & Porter, 2002). This project is a joint effort of the American Counseling Association, American Psychological Association, American School Counselor Association, National Association of School Nurses, National Association of School Psychologists, National Association of Social Workers, and the School Social Work Association of America. It was funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The Project can be contacted at their website -- http://www.apa.org/ed/hlgb.html.

Deliberate psycho-affective education.

What connects the recent shootings in the schools with anti-gay violence is reported in the May 3, 1999 article and cover story in U. S. News and World Report: "Surely it is a rare and complicated convergence of factors. Still, experts see some common threads in the spate of shootings: These adolescent boys can't manage their emotions. They feel rejected, enraged, jealous" (p. 19). They were boys who never learned how to identify, accept, and cope with their feelings.

In American culture boys are not taught how to handle feelings, not by their fathers, nor by the schools (Pollack, 1998; Pope & Englar-Carlson, 2001). Pope (1998, 2000) stated that elementary and secondary schools in the USA do an acceptable job of cognitive education, excellent on information and okay on

critical thinking, but most schools fail when it comes to "affective" education. This is not what is being termed "moral education," nor "character education;" it is affective education, psychological education, or psycho-affective education. Teaching these important affective skills, such as interpersonal, social, and psychological skills, is rarely included in any school curriculum even though such pioneers as Sprinthall (1984) have written about "deliberate psychological education" for many years.

The deliberate psycho-affective education of our children must become a priority or we will continue to see even more school killings by young people who feel they have no hope, no place to turn, no one to talk with, no one who listens, and who have no perspective on life (Pope, 1998, 2000; Pope & Englar-Carlson, 2001). These students feel that any personal rejection or emotional hurt they experience is a tragedy from which they can "never" recover. Only in touch with feelings of hurt and emotional pain and having no other interpersonal skills to cope with these overwhelming feelings, they blast away, taking out some who they feel have caused them that pain and others who are innocent bystanders, but it is directed at the institution they know best. Their parents take their rage to their workplace as that is their primary institutional focus; their children take their rage to their schools.

For example, in the Jonesboro, Arkansas massacre of 10 students and a teacher by an 11 year old boy and a 13 year old boy with semi-automatic weapons, shooting their victims as they exited school during a fire alarm, many of their classmates now tell how the boys had talked about doing this for awhile. What caused this? According to news reports, one of the boys was "enraged" over having been "dumped by his girlfriend."

Pope (1998, 2000) reported that many people in US society and school systems undervalue psycho-affective education. Although the schools cannot cure

all the ills of our society, education is more than information and even more than critical thinking. It is also about who we are and who we love during a time in our lives (school age) when we have many questions about those issues. Not enough attention to these issues is given in our schools. We must educate the whole child not just the cognitive part. What we are seeing is the effect of that omission.

Professional school counselors are important to the total care and education of our students, from elementary school through high school (Pope, 1998, 2000). The following three types of school counselor activities are examples of deliberate psycho-affective education in the school: school counselors providing mental health counseling, career counseling, and providing a safe place to openly discuss sex (Morrow, 1997; Pope & Barret, 2002a; Pope, Prince, & Mithcell, 2000). The more that homosexuality and sexuality in general is treated as a taboo subject and not discussed openly, the greater the risk of homophobia and misinformation, and the greater the risk of violence to sexual minority youth. Many of these issues are addressed in the Personal/Social domain of the American School Counselor Association's new standards for school counseling (www.schoolcounselor.org).

Valuing differences.

Respect, appreciation, and valuing of differences is essential to stopping the violence against sexual minority students (Pope, 2000). "Teachers, counselors, administrators, and parents need to be more outspoken in their desire to teach their children about developing positive self-esteem and greater acceptance of differences. Although most individuals would agree with this on a case-by-case basis, everyone seems to have his or her area of difficulty in the acceptance of diversity" (Besner & Spungin, 1995, p. 36).

As a result of such difficulty, inclusive diversity training workshops have been developed. Inclusive is used here to mean that "diversity" is inclusive of ethnic and racial minorities as well as sexual minorities (Pope, 1995). An excellent tool

in teaching individuals to appreciate and value human differences is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), a Jungian personality inventory. One of the most important outcomes of using the MBTI is to teach the importance of the individual's opposite personality traits. For example, although your personality preference may be for extraversion and others for introversion, there is no inherent hierarchy in which one is better than the other; in fact, both are required for successful functioning in the world (Myers & McCaulley, 1985).

Other tools are available for teaching multicultural and diversity lessons, including GLSEN's "Teaching Respect for All" and Besner and Spungin's (1995) model workshop for educators on homophobia in their Appendix B (pp. 133-153). The National Coalition Building Institute, B'nai B'rith, and the American Friends Service Committee all offer excellent workshops on these topics and more (Owens, 1998; Pope, 2000).

In terms of the school curriculum, it is important to integrate and infuse gay and lesbian examples into all courses where appropriate (Pope, 1995, 2002). For example, when discussing US history and the role of Native Americans, it would be appropriate to mention the revered position of "winktes" and "berdaches" (Native American terms for sexual minority persons) in the spiritual life of American Indians as the shaman or medicine person of the tribe as well as the many examples of female warriors (Katz, 1976). After reading "The Picnic", a short story by James Baldwin, a world famous African American author, teachers can discuss Baldwin's gay orientation and the results of having a double oppression (gay and African American).

Finally, school workers who are sexual minorities themselves should be encouraged to disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity and be offered support and employment protection. One openly gay or lesbian teacher can affect the atmosphere of the entire school in a positive way. The importance of sexual

minority role models cannot be overstressed and open sexual minority school workers challenge the myths and stereotypes for all students, not just the GLBTIQQ ones (Owens, 1998).

The power of subtle signs.

There are also many ways of letting sexual minority students know that professional school counselors, teachers, administrators, and other school workers, are supportive of their struggle. If, because of your school district, you are unable to be as overtly supportive as you would like to be, there remain a number of other ways in which you can still relay to sexual minority students a message of your support.

Here are a few of the more obvious ones:

1) have a "safe zone" sticker at the entrance to your office or classroom (available from the Bridges Project of the National Youth Advocacy Coalition or at www.glsen.org);

2) have available in your school guidance office and library literature on sexual minority youth concerns (see www.umsl.edu/~pope for a bibliography);

3) post online resources for sexual minority students such as: International Lesbian and Gay Youth Association (www.ilgya.org); Parents, Family, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (www.pflag); Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Educators Network (www.glsen.org); Gay and Lesbian Teen Pen Pals (www.chanton.com/gayteens.html); National Resources for GLBT Youth (www.yale.edu/glb/youth.html); Oasis (teen magazine) (www.oasismag.com); Outright (www.outright.com); Out Proud, National Coaltion for GLBT Youth (www.cybrespaces.com/outproud); The Cool Page for Queer Teens (www.pe.net/~bidstrup/cool.html); and National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (www.ngltf.org).

4) offer free family counseling services on campus to deal with the issues of homosexuality;

5) use gay and lesbian positive examples in your teaching or counseling;

6) use inclusive, stigma-free language in the classroom and in all communication, such as "partners" instead of "husbands and wives";

7) post pictures of famous sexual minority people (see list at www.umsl.edu/~pope).

By demonstrating an accepting attitude, school workers can send a strong message to students and create a tolerant environment within the entire school. The issues of tolerance, acceptance, and value can all be explored under the umbrella of diversity.

Conclusions

The role of the professional school counselor in working with sexual minority students is clear. School counselors are there to assist students in discovering who they truly and honestly are and then to help them develop a strong and positive personal and cultural identity so that they can live happy, successful, and productive lives in our society.

Further, the professional school counselor is expected to take a leadership role in protecting and advocating for sexual minority students as well as developing and implementing school policies that eliminate the verbal and physical harassment of all students, including sexual minority students. This is especially important because research indicates that sexual minority students are more likely to disclose their sexual minority status to their school counselors than to any other school worker (Harris & Bliss, 1997). Professional school counselors must, therefore, be prepared for their sexual minority students when they do present themselves for counseling (Brown, 1991; Pope, 2000).

Further, the relationship is clear between derogatory language/harassment directed against sexual minority students by their peers and adults in the school setting and self-harmful behavior, such as attempted suicide, suicidal ideation, running away, poor academic performance, and truancy (Jordan, Vaughan, & Woodworth, 1997). Professional school counselors must not allow such language or physical harassment for any student.

Clearly the momentum is turning toward the protection of sexual minority students in the schools. In 1993, Massachusetts became the first state to ban anti-gay discrimination in its schools and create a statewide "safe schools" program. The U. S. Department of Education issued guidelines in March, 1997, stating explicitly that lesbian and gay students are covered by federal prohibitions against sexual harassment.

Indeed changes are occurring for sexual minority students. Sam Hanser, a 16-year-old high school student in Newtown, Massachusetts, has spoken on national television of assaults at the hands of his classmates: "A lot of people called me faggot and spat on me and did a lot of annoying things," said Hansen. Massachusetts, however, was the first state to pass a law making harassment of lesbian and gay students a crime. As a result of this, Sam has been empowered and taken on a role of leadership. He runs a hotline for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth, and speaks publicly about sexual minority youth issues. "I think that seeing diversity starts the whole process of being comfortable and acceptance of different people" (CBS Morning News, January 21, 1999).

Attitudes on sexuality and sexual orientation are indeed changing, and this should bode well for sexual minority students. Although the message is not as strong as many of us would like, it is becoming clear that people can have their own private hatreds; however, when this becomes public as physical or verbal

harassment or written into policy, it will not be allowed. The harassment of sexual minority students and teachers should not be tolerated in America or in any society.

Heterosexism, which according to Audre Lorde (1984) is defined as a "belief in the inherent superiority of one pattern of loving and thereby its right to dominance" (p. 45), and homophobia, which is the fear of being gay and hatred of gays and lesbians (Herr, 1997), must be exposed just as racism and sexism have been.

The Massachusetts Governor's Commission on Lesbian and Gay Youth issued a report in 1993 that summarized succinctly a blueprint for ending violence in the schools against gay and lesbian youth. The recommendations included: 1) promulgating school policies which protect gay and lesbian students through: a) anti-discrimination policies which explicitly includes sexual orientation for students and teachers, including teacher contracts; b) policies which guarantee equal access to education and school activities; c) anti-harassment policies and guidelines which deal with handling incidents of anti-gay language, harassment, or violence; and d) multicultural and diversity policies which are inclusive of lesbian and gay culture (Pope, 1995, 2002); 2) training teachers in multicultural issues (which are inclusive of lesbian and gay culture) and suicide and violence prevention as well as changing teacher certification requirements and school accreditation to include this training (Pope, 1995, 2002); 3) school-based support groups for gay and straight students; 4) curriculum which includes gay and lesbian issues; and 5) information in school libraries for gay and lesbian adolescents.

As a consequence of this report, the Massachusetts Board of Education unanimously adopted the nation's first state educational policy prohibiting discrimination against lesbian and gay elementary and secondary students and

teachers (Besner & Spungin, 1995). Many cities in the USA have adopted similar policies in their schools.

Summary and Conclusions

This paper addresses the issues that are important for professional school counselors who are counseling sexual minority students, including gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, and questioning youth. The issues that are addressed include developing a context in which to discuss these issues; "coming out" or the developmental aspects of sexual identity development; the extent of the problems that sexual minority youth face in the schools and society; the effects of negative attitudes and violence toward these youth; and ethical and legal issues in dealing with sexual minority youth in the schools. In addition, school-based interventions were discussed that focus on the role of the parents and schools, separation (e.g. separate schools for sexual minority youth) or culture change, deliberate psycho-affective education, valuing differences, and the power of subtle symbols.

As is readily apparent from the information presented here, many of the problems that sexual minority youth face are the direct result of the abdication of adults who are supposed to love and protect our young and help them develop into healthy and productive citizens, who have been entrusted with the care of all of our young people, but instead are turning a deaf ear to the violence that is being perpetrated against one group of our young -- our sexual minority youth. Failing to create a safe environment for all children is criminal and unethical behavior whether it comes from a school board member, a principal, a teacher, or especially a school counselor. Dr. Kathleen Boggess, a school counselor in the Bloomington, Indiana, public schools and past-president of the Indiana Counseling Association said it best when she said "at our school, the school counselors are the first people the lesbian, gay, or questioning students come to

because they know that we are on their side, that we will do everything possible to help them. That is what a school counselor is supposed to do" (personal communication, June 21, 2002).

The lives of sexual minority students in the schools are getting better and the sad picture painted by many may not apply to all sexual minority youth. It is important, however, not to minimize the detrimental effects of verbal and physical violence and harassment on sexual minority students' lives including their academic performance and social development. What professional school counselors must focus on are the recommendations in this paper for improving the school environment and the quality of life for sexual minority students. It is an important message for all students.

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